

# STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

## DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

April 15, 1977

Dr. Alton Meister  
Chairman, Dept. of Biochemistry  
Cornell University Medical College  
1300 York Ave.  
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Alton,

I was just talking to Norton Zinder, and in passing mentioned some of the considerations that are efficiently summarized in the enclosed letter to the principal of Stuyvesant High School.

He reminded me that your father was the Dr. Meister whom I believe I had met and certainly knew very well by reputation as the founding principal of Bronx High School of Science. (It is hard to believe that I would not have gone there, except that I started high school myself just a year or two before Bronx Science was started.)

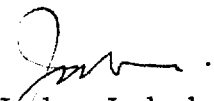
I really have had almost no luck in finding any documentation to describe either the rationale behind the development of the special schools like Stuyvesant and Bronx High, much less the policy struggles that must have attended their establishment, or any kind of retrospective evaluation of their undoubtedly critical role in the recruitment of a whole generation of contemporary American scientists.

So I wondered if either through your personal recollections and discussions with your father, or through records that might still be extant, it would be possible to retrieve any further documentary background for these issues.

I don't know whether the obscuration of this material is entirely a coincidence. There is certainly a substantial movement among class-struggle-oriented critics that does whatever it can to conceal or distort the enormous class mobility that eventuated in New York City in large measure precisely through the availability of the educational opportunities of those schools. Some of this is hinted at in the book by Kessner mentioned in the enclosure.

Anyhow, any light that you can throw on this, however obvious or taken for granted it might appear to be, would probably be helpful and would certainly be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

  
Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics